

A domestic detente is broken

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WASHINGTON—The competition between foreign policy bureaucracies at the White House and the State Department has become inflamed in recent days by several newspaper articles based on leaks calculated to discredit individuals as well as decisions.

"There is an intensity about it again," a ranking State Department official acknowledged this week.

The focal point of the criticism is Zbigniew Brzezinski, the national security adviser to President Jimmy Carter and head of the foreign policy operation at the White House.

Within the past two weeks, Brzezinski has been criticized by unnamed officials in the State Department and other agencies in stories appearing in the Washington Post and the New York Times, the two most influential newspapers in the capital.

It is standard operating procedure here for officials to conduct personal feuds or to try out policy initiatives in the press, and the latest assault on Brzezinski appears to have roots in both his personality and policy.

Brzezinski's sharp tongue, his hostility toward the Soviet Union and his thirst for recognition have antagonized many career diplomats since he came to the White House from Columbia University two years ago. Six months ago, the fighting within the Administration became so harsh that the President instructed the national security adviser's staff and State Department to stop squabbling. When the sniping at Brzezinski persisted, the President warned that he would discipline the critics. A domestic detente ensued.

It was broken this month as the situation deteriorated in Iran. One source said the current uproar was set off by pointing the finger on the issue of "who lost Iran."

In yesterday's New York Times, one news account quoted a "high-ranking State Department aide" who said that Brzezinski was dominating the Administration's handling of the crisis in Iran. "Brzezinski is said to have prevailed in urging the President to express continued complete support for the shah and in turning down State Department advice to call for a more evenhanded policy between the ruler and his opponents," the story reported.

In a front-page story last week in the Times, "sources" accused Brzezinski of ignoring warnings by the State Department that the shah faced serious problems.

That story followed news accounts of a handwritten note from the President that complained of inadequate intelligence reports on Iran. The note went to Brzezinski, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and Adm. Stansfield Turner, director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

In the Times story, Brzezinski was blamed by intelligence sources for leaking the note because it placed much of the failure of accurately assessing events in Iran on the CIA.

A spokesman for Brzezinski has denied that the national security adviser was responsible for the leak.

However, a State Department official said this week that Brzezinski's office had originated other stories unfavorable to the State Department. He said the leaks from the State Department were a counterattack to leaks from the national security office.

One instance the State Department official cited was a story in the Washington Post suggesting that Brzezinski scuttled a round of conventional-arms talks with the Soviet Union in Mexico City this month by imposing restrictions on the US delegation. The story originated at the National Security Council, the official said, but was turned against Brzezinski after the reporter contacted State Department officials involved.

In another story that appeared in the Post on Rhodesia, "policy-makers" reported that Brzezinski had used an undiplomatic remark to describe the point of disaster in that country. It would come, Brzezinski was quoted as saying, "when white nuns being raped by black guerrillas wearing red stars on their armbands start appearing on nightly television news."

An official told The Globe that Brzezinski's remarks were "actually more colorful."

Although Brzezinski has had his differences with Vance in the past, the latest round of criticism appears to be orchestrated by middle-level officials. A State Department official said: "None of this is coming from the seventh floor," where Vance's suite is located.

Brzezinski is described as satisfied that he still enjoys the President's confidence. The adviser believes the criticism is coming from lower-echelon officials "whining" because they have been cut out of the recent foreign policy action.

However, high Administration officials are known to be annoyed at the high profile Brzezinski adopted at the announcement of normalization with China. They say that Brzezinski aggrandized his role during his briefing of reporters.

One prominent official scornfully read to a Globe reporter a news account that accentuated Brzezinski's involvement in the negotiations.

Another official said that Brzezinski's handling of the China story "was unseemly and grates on some people" at the State Department.

"The guy's got no sense when it comes to that sort of thing," the official said.